Please amend the claims as indicated hereafter.

1. (Currently Amended) A system for managing accounts within a network community, comprising:

an account server to manage a plurality of direct accounts for a plurality of resident users of the network community and at least one guest account for at least one guest of a respective resident user;

a client of a respective resident user of the network community configured to send to a non-resident user of the network community an invitation to become the guest of the respective resident user, wherein the account server is configured to create a guest account for the non-resident user after the sending of the invitation and the guest account is activated in response to acceptance of the invitation by the non-resident user thereby making the non-resident user a member to the network community and wherein a respective guest account contains a data field to specify an end-date for canceling the respective guest account, the account server configured to:

after occurrence of the end-date, offer a respective guest associated with the respective guest account an opportunity to convert the respective guest account into a new direct account.

2. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 1, the account server further configured to:

receive an answer to the invitation from the non-resident user;

activate the guest account of the non-resident user if the answer to the invitation is an acceptance of the invitation; and

delete the guest account of the non-resident user if the answer to the invitation is a declination of the invitation, wherein the invitation contains identification information about the non-resident user that is used to setup the guest account of the non-resident user and the invitation provides a mechanism for answering the invitation.

3. (Original) The system of claim 1, wherein the invitation is an email message.

4. (Original) The system of claim 1, wherein the invitation is an instant message.

5. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 1, ~~wherein a respective guest account contains a data field to specify an end date for canceling the respective guest account,~~ the account server <u>further</u> configured to:

~~after occurrence of the end date, offer a respective guest associated with the respective guest account an opportunity to convert the respective guest account into a new direct account;~~

schedule a cancellation date of the at least one guest account after receiving a request to cancel a respective direct account of the respective resident user sponsoring the at least one guest account;

schedule a cancellation date of the at least one guest account after receiving a request, from the respective resident user sponsoring the at least one guest account, to cancel the at least one guest account of the at least one guest; and

schedule a cancellation date of the at least one guest account after receiving a request, from the at least one guest associated with the at least one guest account, to cancel the at least one guest account.

6. (Original) The system of claim 5, wherein the request to cancel the at least one guest account is generated by an act of removing the at least one guest associated with the at least guest account from a roster list of the respective resident user.

7. (Original) The system of claim 5, wherein the request to cancel the at least one guest account is generated by an act of removing the respective resident user from a roster list of the at least one guest.

8. (Original) The system of claim 1, wherein members of the network community utilize a common network service, the members of the network community comprising the plurality of resident users and guests of the plurality of resident users.

9. (Original) The system of claim 8, wherein the network service is an Internet application.

10. (Currently Amended) A system for managing accounts within a network community, comprising:

means for sending an invitation to a non-resident user to become a guest of a resident user;

means for managing a direct account of the resident user of the network community and a guest account of the guest user of the network community, the guest account sponsored by the resident user;

means for creating the guest account after sending the invitation to the non-resident user; and

means for setting up the guest account with identification information contained in the invitation about the non-resident user, wherein the guest account is activated in response to acceptance of the invitation by the non-resident user thereby making the non-resident user a member to the network community _and wherein a respective guest account contains a data field to specify an end-date for canceling the respective guest account, the means for managing configured to: after occurrence of the end-date, offer a respective guest associated with the respective guest account an opportunity to convert the respective guest account into a new direct account_.

11. (Original) The system of claim 10, further comprising:

means for answering the invitation;

means for activating the guest account if the answer to the invitation is an acceptance of the invitation; and

means for deleting the guest account if the answer to the invitation is a declination of the invitation.

12. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 10, further comprising:

means for specifying an end-date for canceling the guest account;

~~means for, after occurrence of the end-date, offering the guest user an opportunity to convert the guest account into a new direct account;~~

means for, after receiving an acceptance to the invitation by the non-resident user, determining if the resident user has an available guest slot; and

means for activating the guest account if there is an available guest slot.

13. (Original) The system of claim 10, further comprising:

means for scheduling a cancellation date of the guest account after receiving a request to cancel the direct account of the resident user who is sponsoring the guest account;

means for scheduling a cancellation date of the guest account after receiving a request, from the resident user sponsoring the guest account, to cancel the guest account of the guest user; and

means for scheduling a cancellation date of the guest account after receiving a request, from the guest user, to cancel the guest account of the guest user.

14. (Currently Amended)   A method for managing accounts within a network community, comprising ~~the steps of~~:

managing a direct account of the resident user and a guest account of a guest of the resident user;

sending an invitation to a non-resident user of the network community to become a guest of a resident user of the network community, wherein identification information about the non-resident user is provided to generate the invitation; ~~and~~

creating a new guest account for the non-resident user after sending the invitation to the non-resident user, wherein the identification information is utilized to setup the new guest account and the guest account is activated in response to acceptance of the invitation by the non-resident user thereby making the non-resident user a member to the network community<u>;</u>

<u>specifying an end-date for canceling the guest account, wherein the end-date is stored in a data field contained in the guest account; and</u>

<u>after occurrence of the end-date, offering the guest an opportunity to convert the guest account into a new direct account.</u>

15. (Canceled)

16. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 14, further comprising ~~the steps of~~:

after receiving an acceptance to the invitation by the non-resident user, determining if the resident user has an available guest slot; and

activating the new guest account if there is an available guest slot.

17. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 14, further comprising ~~the steps of~~:

receiving an answer to the invitation;

deleting the new guest account if the answer to the invitation is a declination of the invitation; and

activating the new guest account if the answer to the invitation is an acceptance of the invitation.

18. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 14, further comprising ~~the steps of~~:

after detecting an act of removing the guest from a roster list of the resident user, scheduling a cancellation date of the guest account; and

after detecting an act of removing the resident user from a roster list of the guest, scheduling a cancellation date of the guest account.

19. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein members of the network community utilize a common network service, the members of the network community comprising resident users and guests of the resident users.

20. (Original) The method of claim 19, wherein the common network service is an instant messaging service.